

MAINE INSTRUCTION 430-380 – PRIME, STATEWIDE, UNIQUE AND LOCALLY IMPORTANT DESIGNATION

BACKGROUND

Published soil survey information has assigned important farmland designations for the purposes of the Farmland Protection Policy Act. Criterion for Prime Farmland Designation is defined in the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 7 Subsection 657.5 *Identification of important farmlands*. For new attributions of Statewide, Unique, and Locally Important farmland, including for onsite attribution by soil scientists, state policy is required.

PURPOSE

This instruction establishes Maine's policy and procedures that are to be used for designating Prime, Statewide, and Locally Important farmlands by Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It is subordinate to law and NRCS General Manual policy.

PRIME FARMLAND DESIGNATION

Criteria for Prime Farmland Designation is defined in the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 7 Subsection 657.5 *Identification of important farmlands*. No supplementary Maine policy is to be utilized for Prime Farmland designation.

Statewide, Unique, and Locally Important Farmland are defined in the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 7 Subsection 657.5.

Supplemental criteria and guidance for Maine is included below.

MAINE NRCS STATEWIDE IMPORTANT FARMLAND DESIGNATION

Note: Web Soil Survey components and soil map units will be designated as Statewide Important Farmland using the minimum criteria below only upon revision of soil survey information. These guidelines are set for use in future updates and soil survey projects, with the intended applicability being primarily for the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

Soils designated as statewide important farmland soils must meet all the following criteria:

1. Do not meet Prime Farmland criteria.
2. Do not have a seasonal high water table within 40cm of the mineral soil surface during the growing season of most years (e.g. must be moderately well drained or better).
3. Are less than 15 percent slope.
4. Have less than 3 percent cover of rock material greater than 25cm in size, less than 40 percent cover of rock material that is <25cm and >5cm in size.
5. Are more than 50cm deep to a root restrictive layer (e.g. moderately deep or deeper).
6. Have greater than 5cm of available water holding capacity in the upper 50cm of soil (Loamy fine sand or finer fine earth texture).

Areas designated as statewide important farmland must be composed of at least 50 percent coverage of soils meeting the criteria above.

UNIQUE AND LOCALLY IMPORTANT FARMLAND CRITERIA

These soils and soil map units where they predominate must be proposed in writing by a Soil and Water Conservation District where they occur because of their importance for agricultural productivity. This proposal must be concurred upon by the NRCS State Conservationist in writing. Documentation of these approved map units shall be maintained in the NRCS FOTG, section II.

CONTACT: State Soil Scientist